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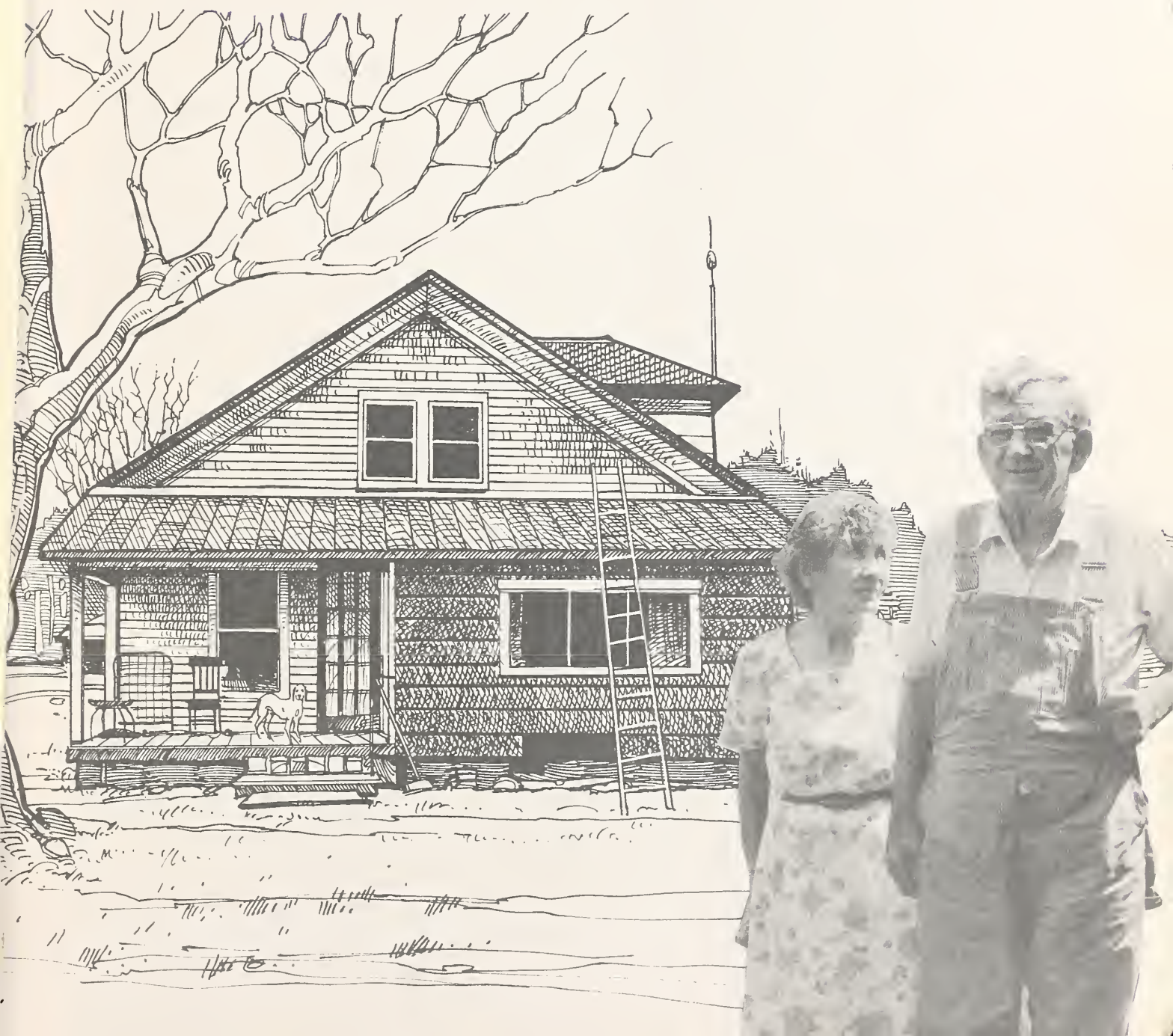
Cultural Resources
Report No. 1



Family of the Hills

An Oral History of Odie and Florence Bridgeman Union County, Illinois

Collected and Edited by Bonnie J. Krause



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CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE FOREST.....	2
THE FAMILY.....	6
LOGGING AND LUMBER CAMPS.....	11
THE FARM.....	15
THE HOUSE AND BARN.....	21
STORIES AND TALES.....	24
SPLIT OAK BASKETS.....	28
THE SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST.....	31
REFERENCES.....	34

FIGURES

1. View of the Pine Hills, 1941, looking toward Bald Knob.....	1
2. Western Pine Hills region, looking toward the Mississippi.....	2
3. Odie and Florence Bridgeman.....	6
4. Protected farm fields in Hutchins Creek valley.....	15
5. Odie and Florence Bridgeman illustrate using a hay rake, anvil in the foreground.....	16
6. The forge that Odie Bridgeman used to repair farm equipment and logging wagons.....	17
7. The Bridgeman house on Hutchins Creek, Pine Hills.....	21
8. Log barn interior, V notched.....	22
9. The log transverse crib barn built by Charles Bridgeman in the 1870's.....	23
10. Log barn interior, half-dove tail notched.....	23
11. Odie Bridgeman splits a white oak log for baskets using a froe for prying.....	28
12. Odie shaves a piece of white oak log to the required width for basket ribs.....	29
13. Odie carefully splits out splints for the basket sides.....	29
14. A split oak basket made by Charles Bridgeman, Odie's father....	30
15. Odie and Florence Bridgeman with an old wooden spoke, rubber tired farm wagon.....	32
16. The Bridgeman place, November 1984.....	33

FOREWORD

Publication of this volume begins the Eastern Region's Cultural Resources Management Report Series. Through this series we hope to disseminate the results of cultural resource projects which are of special historical or scientific interest.

Over the past ten years the Eastern Region has made significant strides in the inventory, evaluation, protection, and interpretation of cultural resources. Much is being learned about the history and prehistory of our National Forests. We want to make this information more readily available to public agencies, the professional

community, and other interested institutions and individuals. It is only through the sharing of information and ideas that we will finally begin to piece together the story of the past.

The Shawnee National Forest provided the funding for this report. Its purpose was to document a vanishing way of life in the Shawnee Hills. I am particularly pleased that our first cultural resources report is an oral history. The experiences, perspectives, and memories of people like Odie and Florence Bridgeman are among our most precious cultural resources.

LARRY HENSON
Regional Forester
Eastern Region

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photographs; Jan Borowitz for her careful and conscientious typing; the University Museum, Southern Illinois University, and Illinois Ozarks Craft Guild; and most of all Odie and Florence Bridgeman for their sharing of memories.

BJK, September 1983

INTRODUCTION

Bordered by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the Illinois Ozarks, with their steep ridges and narrow valleys, form an isolated triangle south of the flat Illinois prairie lands. Soon after George Rogers Clarke's capture of Kaskaskia, Illinois, from the British in 1778 for the American cause, frontier families filtered into the region from the upland south, from Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. With a predominantly Scotch-Irish and English heritage and ancestry, these settlers claimed their small hill or narrow valley farms with an independent, determined and individualistic attitude. This heritage of individualism marks the area as distinctive and as a cultural link to Appalachian and Ozark Mountain traditions and folklore.

Odie and Florence Bridgeman, residents for over 80 years on their Hutchins Creek Farm in the Pine Hills of the Shawnee National Forest, represent this heritage. Their voice

is that of a long American heritage recalling frontier independence and the search for land to be called home.

In 1977 and 1978 this author interviewed Odie and Florence Bridgeman for a folklore project of Illinois Ozarks Craft Guild. In 1981 with Shawnee National Forest Archaeologist Dan Haas, and through the University Museum, Southern Illinois University, this author again interviewed the Bridgemans concerning specific family and local forest history. Full tapes and transcripts of all interviews rest with the sponsoring agencies.

This document was conceived to record the words of the Bridgemans and their lifetime within the forest. Where possible the voices are those of the Bridgemans, edited only for clarity. It is hoped this work celebrates for posterity the Bridgemans as a living cultural resource of the Shawnee National Forest and the Illinois Ozarks.



Figure 1. View of Pine Hills, 1941, looking toward Bald Knob.

THE FOREST

Florence: *"Now I've seen a lot of big trees."*

At the lower end of Illinois where the state narrows to the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and juts into the upland south of Kentucky and the Missouri bootheel, the Ozark hills thrust abruptly above the floodplains to wander north and south, east and west in a series of long narrow ridges. On the western side of the state, sheer cliffs rise nearly 500 feet above the Mississippi floodplain. Their white limestone contrasts sharply with the green verdure. Caverns, subterranean streams and springs harbor amid the limestone rocks. This area extends approximately 50 miles north-south along the Mississippi averaging three and a half miles in width. Within these hills, in Union County, lie the

Pine Hills, now a part of the Shawnee National Forest.

The Pine Hills region is unique with its limestone cliffs, swamp, and ponds on the west. Springs flow from the base of the cliffs to feed the swamp and limestone glades. The area has the greatest diversity of habitats and thus species in Illinois, and because of its irregular and rough ridges, it has been less disturbed and contains virgin examples of forest. Unusual wildlife includes the bobcat, swamp rabbit, golden mouse, mud snake, and timber rattlesnake. Fish include the spring cavefish, banded pygmy sunfish and starhead topminnow, among others. The area holds the entire Illinois population of the eastern



Figure 2. Western Pine Hills region, looking west toward the Mississippi.

woodrat. The Pine Hills shelter many endangered, rare and relic species of both plants and animals.¹

The higher and southern slopes of the Pine Hills are covered predominantly by oaks and hickories. Mid-slopes harbor maples. The ground cover in this area, limited by the canopy, contains poison ivy and virginia creeper. Lower slopes, northern slopes and protected valleys give rise to beech, tulip trees (yellow poplar) and black maple. The forest floor includes poison ivy, virginia creeper, ferns and violets, maidenhair fern and christmas fern. During spring, wild dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, spring beauty and jack-in-the-pulpit appear. On the dry southern slopes exposed to constant sunlight, the sunflower, fleabane and tick trefoil join virginia creeper.²

Unique and unusual vegetation listed for both the Ozark Uplift area and the bottomlands include the buttonbush, watercress, little bluestem, duckweed, waterfern, water flaxseed, side-oats grama, red iris, alumroot, azalea, mountain mint, featherfoil, manna grass, and poverty grass among others. Rare forest trees include cherrybark oak, pumpkin ash, American elm, Drummond's red maple and willow oak.

According to early surveyor reports of 1810, the wetland was part of a large lake and was inaccessible. Buttonbush probably edged the open water and the largest and tallest trees were sweetgums which reached four feet in diameter.³

The virgin forest of the Pine Hills was bottomland forest to the west of the ridge and upland along the ridge itself. John Mason Peck in 1834 stated: "The alluvial soil of the rivers produces cottonwood and sycamore of amazing size."⁴ In the EMIGRANTS GUIDE TO THE WEST, 1837, the author comments about sycamores: "To say that twenty or thirty men could comfortably be lodged in one, would seem a monstrous fiction to a New

Englander, but to those accustomed to this species of tree on the bottoms, it is nothing marvellous (sic)."⁵ These upland and bottomland forests held a greater variety of species and better growth than northern Illinois forests. Individual acres of this type of forest yielded more than 12,000 board feet while the average is around 6,000 board feet per acre.⁶

On the upper dry western slopes of the Pine Hills, shortleaf pine still clings. Common to the clay soils of the Gulf states, the yellow pine is located in only two areas in the state, the location in the Pine Hills being the largest and most diverse. Its occurrence in Union County marks the species' northern limit.

As Odie Bridgeman states: "There used to be pine in there. Lots of it. And it's almost gone, isn't it?

"Dad went over there one time and he wanted rosin for somethin. He went over there and hunted, dug himself up some pine knots. He knew they wouldn't rot. He got them and melted some rosin out of it. There musta been pine over there.

"He cooked that out. He had an old iron kettle. And I don't know where he got it but he had an iron outfit he'd set that kettle over it. He stacked them pine knots up in under it. And build a fire over the kettle. It got hot, run that rosin out. Just put those knots under the kettle and build a fire on top of it. They wouldn't burn.

"I don't know whatever went with it. I guess they cut some of it. But I never thought there was any trees in there hardly worth cuttin. On that rocky hillside, they don't look like they was very big."

The forest was a daily experience for the Bridgemans. It was accepted as a natural part of the Hutchins

Creek Valley.

Florence: "The big trees. I've seen a lot of big trees but I don't remember the biggest tree."

Odie: "I don't know. I seen pretty big white oak. Over 38 inches. I believe there was an elm around, I don't know how big it was. I don't know what the biggest ones was in there, but I know it took all you had of a six foot saw to cut em."

The first inhabitants of the Pine Hills virgin forest were the prehistoric Indians. Middle Woodland culture (300 B.C.) utilized flint obtained on Clear Creek southeast of the Pine Hills. It is possible Late Woodland Indians occupied rock shelters and caves within the hills. Florence Bridgeman stated the following from her life in the area.

"The Indians were in here. Because they lived right here on this hill back here. There was a trail went out towards Bald Knob out that way. Then it came right into this place up here where they made these arrowheads and flintstone. There's no flintstone around here, they had to pack that flintstone from somewhere. And those great big stones they had to roll down. They packed that for miles I guess up here where they could make them arrowheads. It was on a hill where they could see all around. You could go up there and dig deep. There's graveyards down below this hill. I was living here when they dug up some bones. Jawbones was all that was found. It'd been too long. They'd line that grave with rock, bottom rock, side lined with rocks. Covered over it."

Although prehistoric Indian sites have been found nearby, there is presently no record of historical Indian habitation in the Pine Hills.

Being lifetime residents of the forest, Odie and Florence Bridgeman have become acquainted with its ability to predict as well as to cure. As Florence stated:

"The Bible says there's signs and wonders and if you study those wonders, you'll find out what they are. And I've always been one to do that.

"You see, when the leaves turn up, whenever they turn their bottoms up the tops side down, then they're holdin up for a rain. Just as long as they hold their head this way, it won't rain. But whenever they turn up they're wanting a drink. Poplar you'll notice more because they're white underneath.

"Another sign, the rocks will be real dry and you get up, those rocks will draw damp. They'll look like it come up a rain and haven't even had a rain. That's a sign of a rain too, dry rocks turn damp.

"I seen a ring around the moon and maybe one star in it and they claim it's one day before it rains. If there's two stars, it'll be two days. But I've seen that fail.

"They claim it'll rain that night when a whip-poor-will is hollering. If the rain is over, it won't rain the rest of the night.

"Our daddy would make a tonic for colds, black root tea and put in winterfern. The black root is a laxative, good for you. You could make a hickory bark tea, scaley bark. You have to cook it down to a syrup. Put sugar in it and cook it to a syrup. Hickory bark and whiskey."

The Bridgemans have also learned what to do when the forest strikes against them. Especially poison oak and poison ivy.

Florence: "My niece, her daughter, she had gotten out and got poison oak. She was about ten years old. She was fair complected, her legs would swell. That leg was just a-weeping. Oh, it was running out.

"One night Odie and I went by to see Delores and I said, 'Delores what are you doing for that?' She said, 'I had her to the doctor three times. I'm using doctor's medicine on it.' I said, 'Lord, Mercy!' Her leg was just swelling. I said, 'Have you got any milk?' 'Yeh.' 'You got some bread here?' 'Yeh.' I said, 'Give me a loaf of bread. Clear the table off there and get me a big rag, long enough to wrap her leg in. And get me a loaf of bread and a quart of milk.' I fixed a poultice, laid her leg in that and wrapped that up. Now I said, 'Tonight, you put another one on.' And she said the next night she put another one on and she went to school the next day. So don't forget it. That's the best thing in the world. Bread and milk for poison oak. I don't care what they tell you.

"Milk is good for poison ivy

too. Bread and milk is awful good for that and just milk alone."

The forest also brought other danger and excitement in the fall to the people living within it on their farms. Odie Bridgeman remembers:

"It was fun keeping the fire out of the paling fence in the fall. The woods always burned over every fall. Never missed. I don't know who set em afire. They get them afire and you had to build a fire to keep em from burnin you up. It didn't burn big like it would now. It got the leaves off the ground. Now it would be a little of everything. No telling how thick. It was smaller then because it had just burned off the year before, gets just the leaves. It didn't hurt the trees. Without there being a log or something leaning against a tree. It was just a flash. Then it was gone. You had to go ahead of it and put that fire out or build another one to backfire it. The backfire you just let it burn out. We would rake the leaves. Rake out a path and then build a set of fires. You got a path."

THE FAMILY

Florence: *"He just wanted to keep me there."*

Odie: "My father, Charles Bridgeman, came from England. I think he come across as a stowaway when he was seventeen years old. My mother was born here. When my father come here, he come down here from Jacksonville during the war (Civil War). He was in the army. He was just a private. The only place I ever heard him mention about was down here around Cairo. He said there were soldiers all over. He'd tell about the cholera that hit them down there. There was a lot of em were sick.

"Dad worked for Ike Hartline over here in the Mississippi Bottoms right after the war. Ike must a had some money. Dad said he was a banker for the community. He loaned and made his money. He seen a fellow coming during the war, he'd hide out. Maybe they wanted to pay off their debt or something. And he was afraid to take their money. He would rather have the debt than the money. Because he didn't know which way the war was gonna go.

"He got married down here at Wolf Lake. Rented a farm south of Wolf Lake. He couldn't live there. It was swampy, all the ground in there was swampy. Mosquitoes down in there were so bad he couldn't stay.

"He was married twice. He had five or six children by his first wife, then he comes over here and after she passes away, then he married my mother, Ella Mae. Ella Mae Piper Houchins. She was Swedish. I think she come from up about in Missouri. She lived right by that big writer, Mark Twain. Hannibal, Missouri. She had folks down in Tennessee and I don't know how come her to be here. I was born right here, 1891."



Figure 3. Odie and Florence Bridgeman

Florence: "Where we came from was south, down there in the Indian territory. The Trail of Tears. The reservation, Smokey Mountains, that's my folks. North Carolina. They were Cherokee. My great grandmother she was just about full blood and my great grandfather Hale, his mother was full blooded Cherokee. My great grandmother, they moved out when they began running them out, they sold out. My great grandfather bought a place in Tennessee. He raised the children up big enough for them to travel. He traveled them by covered wagon. Imagine they were ox. My grandmother bought Bald Knob, the whole thing. Raised the family there.

"It was always bald because my grandfather Hale and other people who

tended the land up there, why, they always plowed it. You would see it more so than you do now. The fountain was below, where Uncle Bill lived. Seminary Hollow. I don't know why it's called that. Must be an Indian name.

"Went along until I was grown before they got rid of it; before grandma and grandpa got to where they couldn't do anything anymore. Got to where they couldn't work. He raised sweet potatoes, tomatoes, strawberries, all that stuff. They had livestock, they had their milk, enough to keep them there on the hill. Didn't have a big bunch of cows, just had enough for their own use. They'd go to Alto to the store. There were still little stores in Alto, two or three. I was born on Bald Knob. Two pounds and a half, July 30, 1899. My dad was Preston Hale, my mama was Minnie Stone Hale.

"My great grandmother, she was a doctor, a herb doctor. An Indian herb doctor. Different medicines for different things.

"My dad, Preston Hale, was from Kentucky. My dad's father was Scottish Irish. My grandfather was from England and he married an Irish girl from Ireland so that makes grandpa Scottish Irish (Ed. note: Scotch Irish generally refers to Scots who settled in northern Ireland). My dad was born in Kentucky. My grandfather came after the war, that Civil War. He wouldn't talk about wars. He wouldn't tell you nothing. The ones that go and comes back now won't tell you nothing.

"My family's just everywhere, Dad was a teamster. I was raised in the Mississippi Bottoms. He left here and went to Elmo, Missouri and he was a railroad car repair man there. Mama died there. My school stopped.

"Down there (Elmo) they had the round house. They had all the trains, tracks. So these old steamers, they'd

go in these to be greased up. And cars, if there was anything, hot boxes or anything, why, they'd switch em off. My dad worked on that job. He worked there till Mama died.

"I had one sister and a bunch of half sisters. I didn't do any cooking until Mama died. I was too little. I did housework, helped her, washed dishes. Dad would give us so many minutes to do the dishes. If we didn't get it done we got a whippin. Yeah, my sister and me, we had to do it. When we get it done my Mama would come and look em over. If we left anything that wasn't clean, why, we had to do the whole thing again. We done it all the time, everyday, three times a day.

"After Mama died, I had to work, go and cook, things like that, washing dishes for hire. But I stayed with my aunt a whole eight years (her father's sister, an Aldridge). She didn't want me to leave, what would she do without me. She'd leave her tiny little babies with me when they were just born, tiny. I just boil milk and feed them if they'd get to crying. I boil milk. I let it get cold, skim it, sweeten it just a little. And they drank it.

"That's where I lived, by Grand Tower. The house was moved way back, they took part of it out. It was a real big two story house. The trains used to run through our place. Train still travels this road and another train still travels the other one next to the bluff. But not like they used to. There used to be a bunch of them. It flood a lot at that landing. We never did have to move, but I'm telling you it was sure a mess around there. It'd get up above the sidewalks. They built walks with boards, boardwalks, blame rats would get under there. You just had to raise them where you could get in under them and kill the rats. Them were old river rats.

"We got our food right there at

Uncle Tommy's store. He had a store. From all around they came and traded up to Wolf Lake. I went to Wolf Lake school too. Wolf Lake wasn't but about three stores that I know of. Wilson's was one. Wilson lives up here. He's my cousin. He's Clara Aldridge's son, Clara, her mother was a Hale.

Florence: "I wanted to be a nurse. I was gonna be a nurse. And nurses say it was a shame that I didn't get to go to school and be one.

"It was when we lived in the Mississippi Bottoms where I helped the doctor and learned, he wanted me to go to school and take the nurse's training, the doctor did.

"I remember, I was in the kitchen cooking and my aunt was gonna help the doctor. It was an instrument baby. And the doctor, he knew I could take it. So he come in and said, 'I'm gonna have to have some help with this. You're going to have to come and help me.' Aunt Molly, she just fainted. Well, I said 'I'm no granny woman.' He said, 'You're gonna have to learn, so you might as well learn now as anytime.'

"I helped him deliver two of those instrument babies. I had to sterilize the instruments and everything and hand them to him when he called for them. I delivered one by myself. I didn't have no doctor.

"I was down there when little Davey was sick, he was four or five. He had pneumonia and his lungs filled up, plumb both of his lungs. I was dressing and my sister-in-law came in and said, 'Florence you don't need to get ready, he's dying.'

"Well, I went in and looked at him and he was just a gaspin. The oxygen in the house was all taken up, the house was full a people. I said, 'I believe this boy needs air.' I

checked his heart and I said, 'His heart doesn't tell me he's dying.' She said, 'Mama gasped that way all night when she died.' I said, 'If he lasts, we can get him to the hospital.'

"I knew good and well that we could get him out there if he lasted that long. And the doctor come in and he decided to take him to the hospital and he said 'I'll go on ahead and get everything ready.' And I said, 'Don't you think a stimulant would be good for him?' He said, 'If you can get it down him.' I had some whiskey there and I just dipped my finger like that, just put a drop in his nose.

"The doctor come back and I said, 'Don't you think he's better than he was when you left?' He said if he wasn't better he wouldn't live till we got to the top of Milligan Hill. I said, 'Okay, we'll get him ready and we'll be in.' And he come to start gasping and they wasn't gonna let me take him. Aunt said, 'You can't start with him, honey, you just can't, he's dying.' I said, 'Auntie, he's not dying. He's smothering to death! He needs air!' I said, 'Maybe the doctor can draw that off his lungs and give him air and save him.' And I said, 'Theodore, get that car around there.' And I had a new blanket and we just wrapped him up in that blanket. I said, 'Dave (Little Davey's dad) get in that seat, let's get going, we ain't got no time to waste.'

"I didn't wait to make a decision. We got in the car and I had that bottle of whiskey and, boy, I'd stick my finger in there and put a little in his throat. I'd elevate his head a little bit; kept a pillow in there. He was unconscious when we left the house and when we got to Alto, why he said, 'Daddy, where we at?' Dave said, 'We're out here at town, Sonny, we're taken you to the doctor.' Little Davey said, 'I didn't know that.' He'd come out of it like that. Got him out where he could get a little air and then I gave him that whiskey. Kept his blood a going, his

heart a going. The doctor was proud I had brought him out there.

"He couldn't take nothing. They had to go in by his spine, he didn't have any air in him, both lungs was filled up with fluid. Dave was gonna stay in with him but when they put that needle in there, Little Davey gave a yell and went to crying. Dave said, 'Oh, I can't take this.' He come out and said, 'Sister, you'll have to stay with him tonight. I can't stay.' So I went in. The nurse asked, 'You think you can stand to stay in here?' I said, 'I think I can.' I guess she thought I would faint or something. She turned her eyes if I moved a little bit. I was just trying to see what they were doing, you see. I moved and she'd turn around and look at me. Finally she seen I was all right.

"She needed a roll of gauze that was behind me. She said, 'Mrs. Bridgeman, would you get me that roll of gauze, please.' And I handed her that. So I just stood there and watched her draw that out. At night then, he had to have somebody right with him. I stayed so that nurse said to a nurse, 'You know, I wonder if she ever had any nurse's training.' The other nurse said, 'I don't know if she has or not, but if she hasn't she sure would make a good one.'

"She watched that Little Davey that night just as close as I did and never batted an eye. I stayed right there with Little Davey. I was an extra nurse. For nine days Davey was in there and I was taking care of him. They even brought me a bed in there to rest. And Little Davey's got a hole in his back to show. I wanted to be a nurse."

Florence married Odie in Murphysboro, 1921. Florence was 22, Odie was 28. Florence describes their courtship.

"I went to school with him. I didn't pay any attention to him in school. I never even thought about ever marrying Odie Bridgeman. No, I wouldn't think about it.

"It was during World War I and my cousin, he was in the war and he wrote back and wanted me to have some pictures made and send him some pictures. I didn't have any pictures and I couldn't take off my work to go and have pictures made. I knew Odie made pictures. He used to make pictures, develop them and made good pictures. So I asked Mr. DuFrain, Odie's brother-in-law, if he seen him if he would ask him if he would make me a dozen or two.

"It wasn't long till I got a letter from Odie, and said Mr. DuFrain was telling him I wanted some pictures made. Said if I met him at the DuFrain place, I'll take the picture for you. Well, a bunch of us, my sister and I went over to have our pictures made. But before the pictures were made, Mr. DuFrain said his wife was sick and couldn't cook. I said, 'We don't expect any dinner, we just come over to get our pictures made.' And Odie said, 'I'm not gonna take any pictures until I get my dinner.' Then I had to go in the kitchen, a strange kitchen, and cook before we could get our pictures taken. But, of course, he just said that, you know, he just wanted to keep me there.

"We got the pictures made and he sent the proofs over. I wrote back and told him to make me a couple of dozen that were okay and I would send him the money. It wasn't long and I got a little picture already finished, a little thing and my face and body was in a heart. He said, 'I'm sending these pictures to you girls, they are for you girls each to send to your boyfriends.' I said thank you for the pictures.

"It wasn't long I got a letter

and he wanted to know when we were gonna have church over at McGuires and then he wanted to know if he could take me to church. I said it's all right for you to come and take me, but my father would not allow my sister to accept a boy's company. So he come and we started going together. We went together until World War I. He had to go in. He just got there and he taken the flu, got sick. When he got over the flu the war was over. He wanted to marry before he went in but

I said 'No, let's wait until you get out.' He waited then. I just waited for him."

Florence and Odie had three children during the 1920s; Helen, Charles William and Alveda. Charles Bridgeman, Odie's father, died in 1929, 88 years old. As Florence remembers: "Alvie was four years old. Our baby. She would sit on his lap and comb his hair."

LOGGING AND LUMBER CAMPS

Odie: *"There was always sawmills in here, just like a town."*

With the upland forest providing massive oaks and hickories on the hillsides and beeches, cottonwood and sycamores in the lowlands, sawmills and logging camps became natural in the Pine Hills.

Odie: "Now when Dad first come here, 1870's, there was a big saw mill right up here a ways, if you're on the Cauble place. And I heard him talking about a box factory here. Over here."

Florence: "A box factory here? I think it was in Alto."

Odie: "It must have been a barrel factory because they had bucker shavings. When they shaved them, they called from the bucker shavings. They came from the barrel factory, or a barrel stave. I think that is the way it is done. I heard him talking about that, and I can remember the shavings that they had. I remember that part. But I don't remember the mill. I can remember a little bit of the cleaning up of the mill. It was right by the Rawlings place, a little west of the house. You get below the house right down in the flat. Down in that little patch down in there. I think it was before 1900."

"They used white oak altogether for the barrels. That is lately. I don't know what they used in them days. Then it was made different. They made shipping barrels. They'd ship most of their taters and sweet taters and like that in barrels. They was kinda rough barrels. They wouldn't hold water."

Florence: "I've heard of Pokerville. That was back when I was

a kid. They had that camp over there. There was always mills in here. Loggers lived in here, yeh. It was just a logger's camp.

"My dad was a logger. My dad was a good logger. They had teams and wagons. They had wagons and they had horses and they would cut. Then when they got down in a hollow, they put a chain around them and they would pull them up so they could pull them out. Pull a load out where they could get to it.

"My dad had his teamster business. He was a teamster all his life ever since I can remember. He was everywhere. I was raised mostly in the Mississippi Bottoms. But these camps they'd follow them wherever they went. They camped two years, took em two years. They had all this land. I don't know how many tracts of land they had, different people, you know. They just kept the mill one place and I went to school.

"Dad went to different camps. Wherever they had a new log camp, he would move in. He hauled lumber and logs. He hauled logs from the saw to the mills. Then he'd saw the lumber. He'd take the lumber to these chutes and then sometimes he'd take it over the hill. He was just a logger, he had his own team, his own wagon and he followed that. He'd have to take what they paid him. He was hired to do that.

"Mr. Friese, he'd buy up this timber, this tract of timber. Then he'd hire a bunch to get it out. With mules, horses, Dad always had field horses.

"There was a chute to slide logs

down the hill over on the other side of the hill, but it was lumber that come from this side. My Dad hauled it over there to that lumber chute. There was a spur (railroad). There was a spur that run out from the railroad. And there was a chute. They loaded these cars, flatcars. The Henchcliff place, that's where that chute was, right there.

"The way those chutes were made, they had rollers on in there. They just elevated it. They put that lumber on there, big boards nailed up, and those rollers in the bottom would take it right on down and shoot in on to this flatcar down at the bottom. They'd be down there loading it up at the bottom. My Dad did that until I was about 14 and then when everyone went to work on the railroad, he was a car repair man. My Dad...that's what I was telling you, that is where they worked. At Friese's sawmill down here. They moved it around."

Odie: "It sat up here. Then it sat up, what we call King Holler, then it sat here what we call the Rader place. It is down there on the other side of the Godwin Trail.

"Oh yeh, Dad sold some timber. He sold a piece up here that has never been cut over. I don't remember him selling any more timber.

"We had white oaks up here, I don't guess that tract was ever cut over. There was some pretty big timber there. I don't know what the biggest ones was in there, but I know it took all you had of a six foot saw to cut em. Big oaks. You know how a crosscut saw goes? It took a good saw to cut em. Hauled em with a double team. They would get them on the wagon and you couldn't see the wheels. They were right on top of them and you couldn't see your wheels.

"It's all been cut over now. It has been cleaned out. They'd sell it and they'd have different ones to cut it off. You see, Friese bought it

here. And then some of them would haul it off to another mill. Like the place in Wolf Lake or Jonesboro. Most of it was sawed up here and hauled out as lumber."

Florence: "Went off as whatever they wanted. If they had an order for a certain thing, they sawed it out. That's what they did. They would have an order for sills, maybe. They sawed out that order for sills. And then if they had an order for a load of lumber, for a certain length, well, they sawed it out. That's the way they did it."

Odie: "All of them loggers lived around these sawmills. And they would go out and do the cutting. And logging. Now her father done a lot of that. He moved to the place."

Florence: "Yeh. We came with him, whole family. I lived at a logging camp up until I was 13 years old. We went to school up here. They had a school house. There was better than a hundred kids that went to school there. "

Odie: "There was always sawmills in here, just like a town. Just to give you an idea, that little school house up here, wasn't as big as one of my rooms in the house. It had over 80 pupils one winter. Mostly from them logging people working at the sawmill.

"Cauble School. It belonged to Johnny Cauble. And his heirs, Will and Adam, got the place. Teachers come here and stayed. They boarded with us several winters. They paid whoever they stayed with for boarding. The school didn't pay much. I remember one teacher, Wiley Robertson. I think my mother was director. He only got \$25 a month from the County.

"There were always several families lived in here. Went to

school at one time. One winter. Little old room. One teacher. I got up to the eighth grade. That's about as far as they went. Reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, physiology, geography, spelling. I know there was a school there in 1919. The last teacher was Charlie Rhodes. He taught up there in '24."

Florence: "At the logging camp they had tents if you didn't have a house. But the one we lived in up here was a big camp, we lived in a big house. We had a big house and we even kept boarders.

"I remember when I was six years old and my daddy lived at this sawmill camp. And he was hauling logs for the camp. There was something was getting around bothering everybody. Everybody was scared. There was a panther. Somebody had put out a panther scare. They had seen it. They got a whole bunch of them to go sit up on the sawmill roof. They all sat up there with their guns, all a-watching. They was going to kill the panther. They said this certain night, they was going to get it. And whenever they found out what it was, it was a calf that was Mrs. Strout's. Aunt Sarah Jane Strout's calf. It was eating around, salt and the like.

These people at the camp lived down in Arkansas and they come up here and tell tales like that. Panther tales and such. My dad was into that too, scaring people and putting this panther tale out.

"Friese ran the mill. Friese went all the way down (the Pine Hills)."

In a December 1981 interview with Finis Friese, son of the original sawmill camp owner in the Pine Hills. Finis filled in details about the camp.⁷

"They cut pine, poplar, sycamore and gum. He sawed that and stacked it

so it'd dry because he didn't have a market for it. There was beech too. Sometimes they could work some of that beech in as a hard wood. But other times they wouldn't take it, so he just stacked it. Red oak, black oak, maple and hickory he cut most. The hickory he cut it into car spokes and car rims. Called that chair stock. They made the car wheel wood then.

"Dad cut railroad ties out of his rougher timber. Top logs that had knots in them and limb knots, he cut his ties out of them. Then the clear logs, there wasn't no limbs on them, that's where he cut his other.

"It was a steam sawmill, big blade, I imagine 50-52 inch blade. Must a been around 1910, 1911. It was one man on the carriage, hold the log down to the carriage. That was one that log jack, roll the logs in. Had a head sawyer. Two log bearers and had to have a man to fire the engine, fire the boiler.

"The boiler was on skids. He moved that sawmill right over here. And it come a snow and it would bog the wagon wheels up. So he put the boiler on two sycamore logs. Had three big pair of mules on that, had to put it on skids to pull it on to town. Wagon hooked on behind. And that little bridge below our farm there, the wagon run off the side of the bridge and dumped some stuff out. They had a hard time, I tell you.

"And the reason the camp was called Pokerville, Dan Hartsock's mother kept boarders and this fellow, he boarded with her and he got behind with his board and Mrs. Hartsock got after him with a stove poker and a whippin him to make him pay his board and that's how come they call it Pokerville.

"Seemed to me like there were four tents. One time, I believe this was Christmas time. You see, they had wood stoves and the stove pipe went up through the ceiling, they had boards

over the tent to keep the weight of the snow off the tents. Well, this time, one fellow taken a tow sack and crawled up there on top and stuffed that tow sack in there. Well, when the family come in, there was no way for the smoke to get out, only come into the tent. The fellow he just goes out with this shotgun and he just cut his stovepipe off even with the rest of it. Now that's the way they use to play back then. They were up for everything.

"There's a place there (Pine Hills) that a lake just went into the bluff. And when Dad went to take up ties, course he had to drag em down, put em on a wagon and haul em around the bluff to Wolf Lake where they loaded em on railraod cars. Dad said, 'By jimmeny, why not just dump em off the bluff here in the lake and float em out.' He marked one. Dumped it. Well, went down, bubbles came up. Never did see it no more. Three of em stood there and said, 'By jimmeny.' He said, 'That one's gone.' He hammered another one, up ended it. Gone. 'Well,' he said, 'That ain't payin off.' Them two logs, they just went down there and stuck in the mud. Bottom of the lake, never did come out."

Odie: "He must of been trying to log sycamore. Some wood will float and some won't. You take sycamore and it'll sink like a rock."

Florence: "The only camp different that I remember, other than Friese, was Ike Stearns'. That was right down there above Goodacres."

Odie: "Friese logged all around here. I don't know whether he went above the Cauble place or not. I

expect he did. That mill was in that hollow for awhile. There has been three set on this place. Ike Stearns had a mill down here. And so did the Dunbar Mill Lumber Company, Cairo, had one in here. Harold Lindsey had one in here. I don't know how many more. They would buy off our tract, you know and move into it.

"Ollie bought 40 acres up here. Let's see, yeh 80, not 40. I sold 40 acres up here. So I sold him another 40 to go with it. He had 40 acres in here he cut off. It was different times. Norton had a mill up here too. They hauled it off. All the rest of them cut the timber and hauled it off."

In an interview Finis Friese added that his father had the sawmill at least three different places in the Pine Hills. He also mentioned a sawmill run by Ham Norton and one at the foot of Larue Hill owned by Charlie Huston, Arthur Gates and Charlie Holcum. The Pokerville sawmill was run by Ed Collard.

Odie: "Friese's up here was a stationary outfit and most of the others was traction steam engines. But his was stationary. One was on wheels and the other one wasn't. Yeh, Friese moved it around. They'd haul the boiler. The engine wasn't so big. I don't know how they moved it. But they hauled the boiler separate from the engine. They run a pipe from the boiler to the engine. For steam.

"For the camp they just threw up a cabin. It was just wallboard. Just boarded up. No permanent outfit.

"They stayed till they'd saw out. Friese was up there a year or maybe two years. And then he moved from there down here."

THE FARM

Odie: "All I know is just get out and turn the hoe. Hoe and plow."

The Bridgeman farm extended over several hundred acres including the wooded slopes of the hills, pasture and fields in the valley along Hutchins Creek. Nestled in a creek bend, the farm carved narrow long fields from the curving bottomland.

Charles Bridgeman built his farm in Township 11 south, Range 3 west, segments of Sections 11, 12, 13 and 14. Land that had originally been purchased by Margaret Lyerle in 1837 at the Kaskaskia Land Office was sold to Charles Bridgeman by John Mighell, a son-in-law of the Hunsakers in 1874; 160 acres for \$1,600. In 1877 Charles bought another 40 acres from John Mighell. In 1888 he expanded the farm through purchase of 40 acres from the Trustees of the Illinois Central Railroad. Thirty acres were bought in 1895 from Penelope Ann Walker and 40 acres in 1904 from Willis Cauble. Thus in Odie's youth, the farm

extended over 310 acres.

Odie: "In them days, they didn't know who the land belonged to hardly. They raised cattle right smart. Him (Charles, Odie's father) and his neighbor down here got together and they built a fence across this a way on this and on that end. They had two or three hundred acres in there in pasture.

"We didn't try to farm hillside. My father did when he first come here, but I never did. He cleared it up. He did just to get the grass started.

"They raised cattle and hogs, was their living. They would raise the hogs and put the money in the bank. Shipped the hogs out to market. Mostly to the National Stockyards. Sometimes these stock buyers would come through here, if he'd get the price out of em, he'd sell em. We would haul them in a wagon, taken em



Figure 4. Protected farm fields in Hutchins Creek Valley.

to Grand Tower or the landing and shipped by boat. Never did ship any on the train.

"He always had sheep too. Had about a hundred acres fenced in. Built a paling fence around it. He had three quarters of a mile of it. Woven and wire. Did the palings by hand. About 30 inches high. One by one.

"They sheared the sheep and sold the wool. Alden Store Company in Anna bought it when I was a kid. Don't remember any shipping, I think he sold it all in Anna. I knowed him to butcher a sheep or two, he done it for the hide. Would tan it and put in on the foot of his bed in wintertime. He was bothered with cold feet. He always had a couple of sheepskins.

"I don't think the sheep was ever bothered much by varmits. There was nothin' in here that would bother them without it be a fox. A fox might.

"There was this one thing. He didn't know what it was. He thought it was a dog. Let one pass and the other one come along behind him and he knew he didn't have two dogs like that. He killed it. Coyote.

"There was about 150 acres cultivated in corn on the whole farm. Fed the corn to the hogs.

"Farmed with a team until '24. Had 10 to 14 horses or mules. Never less than eight. You can do a better job with a mule or a horse. First tractor was kerosene. One of the first tractors, you had to have both. The old tractor was pretty dependable but it couldn't cultivate good.

"All my farming was with horses. We didn't have them cultivators until 1954. Break the ground with a tractor. I done all my cultivation with horses. We had different tools to make hay and like that with. We didn't do it all with a fork."



Figure 5. Odie and Florence Bridgeman illustrate using a wooden hay rake, anvil in the foreground.

Like most farmers Odie found it easier to fix broken things himself, than take the time and long trip to town. Then Odie started thinking about being so close to the logging camp. "I figured in here those old loggers had to have someone to fix it up. I built wagon wheels, wagon axles, different things. Sharpen plows and all that stuff. My father was a teacher. He just took it up himself. I don't know where he started it, but he always had a shop somewhere. A blacksmith shop of some kind. Ordered regular blacksmith coal, what iron I bought I got from Slago Iron Company in St. Louis. Shipped in on a freight."

Fixing a wagon wheel, Odie bought wooden spokes and half rims from Slago Iron. "And when I runned out and didn't find one, why, I make em. Chop them out and saw em out. It's a pretty careful job to get one to stand up. You got to prednear know how. You put the rim on, then you got to leave a gap in them. You don't make em to fit. You want to leave about 1/8 of an inch gap in em. Then you make the tire just a little bit

smaller. Heat it, not red hot, but pretty hot, so it don't burn the wood too fast. Put it on the wood and let it shrink on it as it cools.

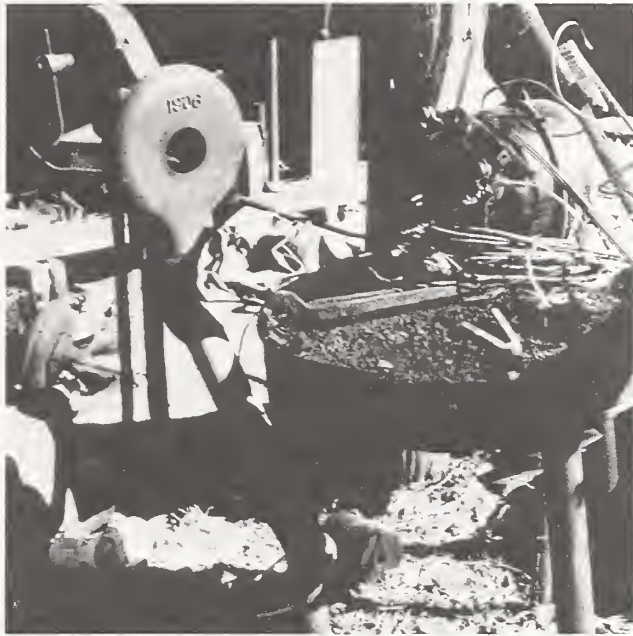


Figure 6. The forge that Odie Bridgeman used to repair farm equipment and logging wagons.

"Most of it was made out of oak. I like hickory. Generally get hickory spokes if you could. It would be stouter. Some of it wasn't.

"I got a hold of some. A fellar down here at Wolf Lake made him an outfit to make spokes with. A sawmill man up here, he had his team a loggin and he got some of them hickory spokes. I built a wheel for him and put em in. A day or two he come back and said that wheel had lost all of its dish. I said, bring it back. It must of gotten rim bound or something. Too big for the wheel. You make them by the cut, you don't make a wheel straight. It's kinda dished like, so when the weight come on the spoke, it was pushing out. If you got it turned wrong side out it will pull them out and break em off. I know when I put the spokes in there they whittled awful easily. I took one out and hit it over the anvil and broke it. He got some of that white hickory. The old white. Now, young

white is good. Had to get him some more spokes.

"You would buy the felloes, you know, that joint there, about that long. Six of them in the front wheel and seven in the hind wheel. Joint pieces. Short pieces in the rim. Rim is half, two pieces in them. Fourteen spokes in a hind wheel and twelve in the front wheel. Front wheels were smaller than back wheels. I don't know why, they just always made them that way.

"Kinda amusing, I guess, to young people, way we lived and done things. I had some boys come here one time, talked about welding on a forge like that in the shop. Wanted to know if they could weld on a thing like that. They didn't think you could do it. That's all we had in them days. All these sawmills was around here, log wagons breaking down, you couldn't hardly get any rest."

The vegetable garden was a mainstay at the Bridgeman farm. Corn and tomatoes, beans and squash found their way into canning jars and freezers. Like most residents of the hills, crop planting and gathering were governed by the moon and signs of the Zodiac. The light of the moon refers to the time when the moon is waxing, dark of the moon when the moon is waning. For the relationship between the signs and the moon, an almanac must be consulted. Both planting and harvesting were carefully calculated by Florence.

"I plant by the signs. The Zodiac signs. I recommend... like digging potatoes, you don't want to dig potatoes when the sign is wet. When the moon is black, going down. Dig it when it's almost full, is when it's best. Don't dig em when the sign is in the bowels. Don't never dig anything or put anything or any fruits to keep up when the sign is in the bowels. The breast, in here's the

best time. It's a good time. They plant flowers and cucumbers, plant them when the sign is in the Twins. But you don't want to plant if it's below the bowels." (Ed. note: "Bowels" refers to the Zodiac sign of Virgo, "breast" refers to Cancer and "Twins" to Gemini. The almanac and other calendars record dates when the moon passes through various Zodiac signs.)

Although maple sugar gathering and cooking was a habit with most Pine Hill families, Odie states:

"We made sorghum. I don't know how much. They sold it. We had a mill up here on the back of the creek. My brother, my half brother, he made sorghum after my father got too old. He had a pretty good crop. Made a lot of sorghum."

For Florence a life of farming has brought more than memories of crops and stock, vegetable gardens and wild berries, canning and freezing and drying for the winter. Florence remembers special animals that became friends and pets.

"I had a cow that was trained. I had her trained, I'd go sit down with the stool. Cassie was her name. And I'd sit down and here'd she come. I'd say 'You're not close enough. Come a little closer.' She'd make a circle and come a little closer. And I'd say, 'You're not closer.' She'd come right in on top of me. And then, when we sold her, they taken her off, I just couldn't hardly stand to see that. She got a milk disease. Had to take her off. When she got in there, she turned around and look back at me just as if to say 'Where they taking me now? Where am I going now?' Turn around look back at me. Oh, she was smart.

"I had a dog trained, too, to go get the cattle. When we had this woods was full of cattle. Hundred acres. I'd think them cattle was a

certain way, I could hear the bell and it'd sound to me like it was this way. And I said, 'No, this way, this way.' And he'd run that way. And I'd say, 'No, they're back this way.' And he'd just stand and look at me. And whenever I'd say 'Go and get em then.' Boy, he'd take off the way he wanted to go and he brought them in."

Isolated on the farm with roads that cut through creeks and are washed away in the rains, the Bridgemans built a self-sufficient life. Doctors were miles away and it was simply more practical to make do with what you knew. Florence was the doctor at home, gathering together knowledge she had from her own family and her in-laws, to confront most household and farm accidents.

"I was up at my daughter's and she was sick. I was fixing peaches. I had a gallon jar plumb full sliced. And I had it sitting on the table and I started dinner and I wanted to put it on the cabinet and I picked it up to set over there. I was standing on the concrete, we were in the basement and I dropped that whole gallon on my toe. Right on my big toe. And I tell you it mashed it flat. I could wiggle my toe and it would just squish.

"I thought it was the bones but it was the blood in there. So all I done was went and got me two different temperatures of water and I put my foot in one, then the other one, then the other till all the blood come to the surface. When it did, I taken a razor blade and, boy, I just went around that toenail, ripped her plumb around. Ripped it all around there and let the blood out. And I put a bread and milk poultice on it. You take bread and milk, just make a poultice out of sweet milk and bread, just so it'll go on, leave it good and juicy with milk cause that'll kill the infection. And the bread will draw as it dried. I kept that on my foot and I told the kids to go get me an old

shoe and I went ahead and canned them peaches. That night I went to bed, fixed me a bread and milk poultice and put on there and elevated my foot. Next morning it was fine, just fine.

"Golden seal for sore eyes. Make a tea out of it and take a teaspoon full and put one drop of camphor. Wash your eyes with that. Good for the stomach, sores and sore mouth too.

"Tobacco or turpentine-tobacco or bread and milk will pull the poison out of a sting.

"Mullein is good for sprains. (Ed. note: Mullein is a tall woolly leaved weed with yellow flowers.) They put that in vinegar and salt together. Dip this mullein in and then they bind it on this sprain, it's supposed to help.

"I've heard of madstones but I don't believe it. They claim they will stick and then fall off. They're just like a flat rock full of holes, you know. Like a dog's tongue, shaped like a tongue. They put that rock on and it'll stick and then it'll drop off. I heard that a long time ago. People never had hydrophobia. They soak them in milk before they put them on. I think the milk helps them stick. See the holes, porous rock, causes vacuum.

"Foxglove, that's for the heart, it slows the heart down.

"This stinging nettle is good for nerve rashes. You take those stinging nettles, the bottoms, the roots and make tea out of the roots.

"Burdock is blood medicine and a kidney medicine. Sour dock too.

"Some uses ginseng tea. They claim it makes a baby sleep but I don't think it does. I never had no luck with it.

"This red blood root, that's good for diarrhea. Blackroot tea that's the only laxative around here, a

wonderful liver medicine.

"Sulphur and molasses, my daddy would give us a dose of that every spring. Sorghum, whatever we had, it wouldn't make any difference just so you got the sulphur in the cream of tartar. That was for the blood.

"Once I got bit by one of these red spiders. Them big old brown ones. Bit me right here on my arm. Boy, I was tingling all over, just tingle, tingle. I could just feel that poison going all through me. My uncle, he was here, and I had turpentine and he chewed tobacco. He just took that old tobacco and big old plug of that and I soaked it in turpentine and downed it on there. And left that on there and it killed the poison all right, but it, what poison was in my body, little boils. And every place it would come out, why, it would leave a little round hole. Just like that spider. Then I had to go in and get a shot...to get that dried up. But it would have eventually all got out, but I just didn't like that. All over me.

"Rattlesnake oil is good to keep you from getting grey headed. You get that when you're young before you get grey. You put that on and just rub your scalp good, it'll keep you from getting grey. It did me. I had a grey spot in my hair, when I had surgery, and I came out and I had a grey spot right there. I was just forty. I heard of Grandma Bridgeman, Odie's mother, said that was good. I had some oil here, rattlesnake oil. So I just simply scoured that into the scalp, left that in there and that there never did turn grey until recently. I don't know if it is grey yet or not. Right here.

"We killed the snake and I rendered it. I just took the fat and rendered it out. Opened it up, took the fat out and rendered it. You want the fat. Either male or female but you want to watch what you're getting. But it's better from the female.

"Now I've heard say to take the skin of a snake, you know they shed them every year, and when you have a boil, won't come to a head. You just take and wet that good and bind that around there and that will draw it to a head. Now I don't know, I never tried that, but I've heard that.

"Something unusual the other day happened. A copperhead bit our dog. Bit him right on the lip. Scared me to death. I was scared to death he'd die. On, it swelled up his head. Boy, I just flew in and got some turpentine and coal oil, mixed it together and soaked his head good and poured it all in his mouth. Then I come in and got some hamburger meat and I soaked it with bacon grease and let him eat that, what I could get him to eat before he got too far along. After that I beat up four or five eggs and about a quart of milk and had him drink that and by the night he was a-playing.

"I can take warts off. I've never failed yet. I just rub them,

tell them to throw the things away, don't want them, they'll leave. I don't know how many people has come down here for me to take them off. I just say, 'Throw it away.' I heard of other ways too, and I did it and it left. I was up here in the holler and I had a wart on my finger and it was a-bothering me. I got thinking about his mother said to take an old bone and rub it. They used to take the horses way back in the woods and leave them. And I was up there after the cows and I happened to see a bone, made me think of that. And I just picked that up and you want to lay it down just like it was. And then don't look back, go ahead. And that thing left."

But Florence warns about home remedies: "It can kill you, you've just got to have a little bit. It's all right to have the home remedies if you know how much to use. So you never want to overdo it, whenever you take it. You just want to try a little and then see. Never overdo it."

THE HOUSE AND BARN

Florence: *"We had buildings all the way up and down the creek."*

Secreted in the narrow valley, the unpainted Bridgeman house has settled comfortably under large trees. Its barewood siding blends into the natural colors of the fields and forest. The old barn has tumbled back to the earth. And the forest has begun to reclaim its heritage with briars and bushes and new shoots of young trees.

Florence: "This (the front room) is the first part of the house he built."

Odie: "Now I think that he tore the front part of it down. We don't like it. I think that part of it was already here when he come here. This is part of it. It originally belonged to Hunsakers. This part wasn't logs. I don't know where they got the

frame...there was a sawmill in here."

Florence: "I think this is up and down yellow pine. I think this house, the house originally was up and down board, sawed. Up and down, just straight boards."

Odie: "Part of it was framework and plaster inside. The house is poplar, yellow poplar. With a fireplace. It was stone. Big rock."

Florence: "He would lay big flat rocks with cement between it. I tried to get Dad to get a stove before he died. It was so cold, it just took so much wood in the one fireplace."

Odie: "The fireplace would only warm you one side."



Figure 7. The Bridgeman house on Hutchins Creek, Pine Hills

Florence: "Dad said that he wouldn't be here much longer, and he said that when I'm gone you can do what you want to do."

Odie: "The fireplace was sandstone. It was over there in that part of the house. Out there. I built this room on here. That was the porch and I just fenced it in. Pretty good pieces of sandstone. Just whittled it out, made a pretty good looking fireplace. I believe the house was three rooms there and these two here. That was the front room in there and this was supposed to be a dining room and that was a kitchen. (Ed. note: The house now contains a large living room and kitchen on the south side, a bedroom, dining room and back room on the north. It is apparent that the large living room has included the former porch and dining room.) I don't believe the kitchen was as big as it is now. When I remodeled I think I moved the kitchen this a way a little. That was the front room, then there was a bedroom here and a back bedroom that way."

"I remember we had two kitchen stoves. One cast iron. Then we got a range, then we got another cast iron stove. When Florence and I was married we got a gas stove."

"I got tired of getting wood for that fireplace. They'll burn it up. Bring in a stitch of wood. Take two to carry em in, you had to roll em in. We always had a big chunk in back, we called it the backlog. The sticks in the front. Twenty-four sticks and a back stick...that's the riddle. How many sticks would that be? Twenty-one, because it is twenty and the FORE sticks."

Florence: "We had buildings all the way up and down the creek."

Odie: "There were three or four barns here. We had three barns here and a couple up yonder. We had one for sheep and one to put hay

in. We called them barns. They were hardly a barn, I guess. Had a smokehouse and always put pork in it."

Florence: "And they had an ice house in the back here. There was a filled wall packed with sawdust. They'd keep ice in there year around."

Odie: "They wouldn't keep it the year around, keep it up until about August."

The barn, which has collapsed in recent years, was a large double log barn with a central aisle. The corners were half dovetail. Interior partitions of logs were fitted with V shaped notches into the sidewalls. It is typical of Upland south (Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia) barns which are referred to as transverse crib barns.

Odie: "Dad built the big barn, him and Buck Eye Brown, he called him. He hewed them logs out. I couldn't tell you what kind of notching, they were just notched



Figure 8. Log barn interior, V notched.



Figure 9. The log transverse crib barn built by Charles Bridgeman in the 1870's.



Figure 10.
Log barn interior, half-dovetail notched.

together. They are locked. The notch makes a lock. It locks in the joints, together.

"It was poplar and oak. (They snaked the logs out of the woods.) I don't know how he got them logs up there. There were some of them, the top logs, the plates, was 14 inches square and they were 44 feet long. You know, that is a big tree, 14 inches square. He had skids. I don't know how he got them up there but there was a pair of blocks, pulley blocks. He got them, they come off a steamboat. They was here. I think he used them some ways. I think they set something up in the middle of the barn, a post or something. I heard him say that a fellar he had working for him fell, like to broke his neck. Fell through them logs.

"I helped on a few (log) buildings. I didn't do no notching or nothing like that. I helped hew them, get em ready to hew. You would get up

on top of them, top notches, and split them out. Split the blocks out of it till you get down to where they'll stand. They scalped the top of the logs. A little bit on each side. Then they take a chalk line and chalk it. Then you hew to that.

"Then you would get up and notch in, chop in to that and then knock that piece out every foot or two foot, you would chop in, split out. Then you get it down, then they would come along and finish the job with a broad axe. Wasn't too pretty. (Ed. note: The broad axe has a slight curve in the handle to assist in hewing.)

"They used a wooden peg lots of places for barns. Those plates is pegged where they spliced them, they would peg to- gether with about a two inch hole on down through them. Drive a wooden peg in them. I imagine they would use oak or something that would last. Oak would last better than poplar, you know."

STORIES AND TALES

Florence: *"That's the truth, the absolute truth."*

Stories and memories seem to collect with the years. Florence shared several. One of her earliest remembrances is of a pair of shoes.

"I never did want to wear them old rough shoes. I hated them. Old heavy shoes. When we lived there then, Daddy went down and got some old heavy shoes. They laced, old rough leather looking things. And I just bawled and bawled, I didn't want to put them on. So after he made me put them on, I got out and waded everything I could come to. Mud holes, old gumbo, boy, I was wet, inside and all balled up with that. And then I slipped them in the stove oven.

"Of course, Mom, she got up to make a fire. Dad built the fire and Mom she turned the heat on to make it heat the oven. Boy, when she went to put the bread in, those shoes was done. The smoke and leather was a-burning, those old hides a-smelling. Mom wouldn't let him whip me. So, she said 'Now you're just not going to whip her. She didn't want to wear them. She cried and begged and everything.'

"It was cold, it was in the winter. He had to get on the horse and ride plumb up to the bridge, where the little town of Aldridge is, they had a store up there. He had to ride up there and get me a pair of shoes. And when he got them, he come back and they was patent leather bottoms and kid leather tops and a little green clover leaf on the side, suede clover leaf.

"I needed a whipping. I didn't like them old shoes, didn't want em. But I didn't think about burning them up, I just put them in there to dry

them out. I didn't know they was going to burn up. And I didn't care."

"I just remembered a song Dad liked that I had forgotten. It was a cowboy song.

I met a young cowboy all dressed in white linen

All dressed in white linen,
heading for the grave.

Beat the drum lowly, play the
fife slowly

And strike the dead march as they
carry him on.

They take me to the graveyard and
lay the saddle over me

I'm a poor cowboy and I know I've
done wrong

It's once in the saddle I used to
go dashing

It's once in the saddle I used to
be gay

It's first a hard drinking and
then a card playing

And I'm shot in the breast and I'm
dying today.

My mother used to sing that."

Just as the logging camp brought stories, other forms of labor brought stories, especially about pranks. Florence's father told the following about his work in the south.

"Dad said, Mr. Pawbush had an old man on his place, working for him a long time, an old colored man. And Dad said he had a shop and he had an old nail keg in there, in his blacksmith shop. Dad said they got them a piece of rawhide and they picked this nail keg up and they took the top band off it and soaked this rawhide in water and put that over that barrel. Tightened it and let it

dry. It got just as tight as a drum. Then they taken a string and tied it on a little nail to keep it from pulling through, and they get way off, take a piece of rosin and rub that over that and say, boy, that'll just roar.

"The young folks was in the kitchen a courting. Dad said they gave her a rip and the older folks said, 'That you young folks in there making that racket?' 'No that wasn't us.' Dad said they gave it another rip and the young folks was just a flying. Said they gave it another rip or two and the old folks went out, their shirt tails just a flying, didn't even take time to put coats on. Dad said they run to get down there to hide and listen, see what they was going to tell. They forgot their keg, left it under the house.

"Next morning the old colored man was out looking around to see what he could see. He come up there to Dad and said, 'How in the world did you make that old keg make such a noise as that?' And Dad said, 'I don't know anything about a keg' too many time. That's just the way they used to do."

Ghost stories seem to arise from every hill and hollow in the rural countryside. Bridges over creeks, graveyards, and empty houses stimulate imaginations. Missing people and found bodies can only add to the stories.

"Mr. Aldridge used to run a saloon down on the river bank. They had an upper deck and a lower. They had whiskey and everything. They turned that into a house and my aunt was living there and grandma lived there too. They said sometimes you'd hear a gun fire and you'd hear a woman holler 'Oh Lord!' I know it's true because my grandmother and my aunt both told me. I know my Aunt Mary wouldn't lie about it and my grandmother wouldn't. Said that gun

had fired and somebody had killed her. They used to be awful mean over there. That's the truth, the absolute truth."

"I guess it's a ghost. Lots of people would call it that. My aunt, she lived over here, just out this way next to the bluff. Right in there, there used to be a house, a big house belonged to a guy named HENCHCLIFF. And there was a woman missing, come up missing while my aunt lived there. They hunted and they hunted and they hunted. And they could never knew what happened to her. Never could find her. So, my aunt, she lived in this house, and in the back bedroom she would wash, scrub this floor good and everything and a bloodstain was on the floor. In this bedroom. She said she would get down and clean and couldn't see it at all but just come a little dampness and then that stain would come to the surface. She never could get it out. And she said of a night, when they'd go to bed, they'd be chains... rattle, rattle, rattle. Across the porch. That kept that up as long as they lived there. Kept that up. I know Aunt was true about it. They left, said they couldn't take the rattlin.

"Well, when they got that powder plant down there they were blasting rocks. They were blasting close to this HENCHCLIFF place. Right on top of this big high bluff there was a place. I remember going and looking down in it, a deep hole, shaped like a three cornered hole, went plumb down. You could go there and look in, you couldn't see nothing down in there. I remember going and looking. Anyhow, when they blew that off, why they found a skeleton of a woman. That's what that was, you see. I bet they taken that chain, probably someone got on top, they taken that chain and pulled her up there and let her down in there with that chain. I bet you anything. And that woman was standing up, just mummified standing. She just died there. Wasn't enough room for her to fall over. That's a true story."

Places bring stories that are passed from generation to generation. Cave, river pirate and hidden treasure stories have a long tradition in southern Illinois. Florence gave her tales to continue the heritage.

"We have a cave, it's supposed to be over here. It's a sealed cave. It was sealed up and it's never been opened. It was during the time when they had this gold rush on. They come up the river in a canoe. Back then, they come up the Mississippi, on up the Muddy over to the bluff. And where they came in the skiff you could go right to this place. But it has washed in, sealed in now.

"There was a man, my brother told this, an old man and he was living at Ware. This old man asked my brother about this cave, about twenty years ago. My brother knew where the place was and where these skiffs would go in. The old man said, 'If you'll just take me there, you'll never have to work another day.' My brother said he probably wouldn't. He said he showed some papers and those papers were so yellow and old from age. And this here line went up there, my brother said he knew right out. They think he had something up there.

It was after or during the Civil War they would bring in, come in. They brought it in. Brought in whatever they had, brought it up the river. Come in there to this place and hid it. My brother didn't know this old man, he just showed him this old paper. And the description was of the river and all, just like it."

"These colored people, they was working on the Lang Gang working on that levee over at Grand Tower. Lang worked it (the levee) from the railroad out to the bluff. One night I heard the chickens, boy, they were just a telling. You see, what they would do, they would come up the river in a boat. They had a dog trained. The dog would go in and get the

chickens and take them to the fence and they'd get them down to the river.

"This one man, his wife had died and left a bunch of little kids. He had to take a load of hogs to St. Louis and left these children alone. Them thieves knew it. That dog just cleaned their chickens up. They tried to fight him off with pitchforks and he'd bite them. They were scared to death. Got all their chickens.

"They moved from the lower end down there by the Mississippi where the Muddy empties in the Mississippi, why, they come on up and went above our house. We was right there by the railroad. The levee was high. They'd go in and hide behind the levee. And I heard those chickens. I went in and shoved my Uncle Tommy. 'Uncle Tommy, somebody's stealing the chickens.' And boy, he grabbed the flashlight and his gun and he went out there. That dog met him, frightened him. Finally Uncle Tommy just took his head off. It was a kind of a bulldog looking thing. They were just stealing chickens.

"Next morning Uncle Tommy went down to see where they had been coming up and there was the chickens sticking in the fence. They run off and left em. So there was a bunch of men got their guns and, boy, they went up there and they gave them just so long to get out. Pull up their camp and get going. Boy, you never seen so many chicken feathers in your life."

"You know, I've got a tree...I never did get to dig. But I've always thought it was a sign. The Indians, they always marked the iron trees. They looked like sycamores (possibly beech), but the marks will stay in them. And I found the tree, there was a heart at the bottom, there was a man up here, a man's picture carved on it. Then there was an outfit, like a dagger, I think, that run around on the back side, toward the back side. And I just wondered if that could be a

sign, where they had a tree marked where they had something buried. I wondered about that. Iron tree. White man's money or something. I always figured that was the way they'd read it."

Everyone has an "almost" or "near miss" story. Florence remembered:

"I was gazing across over there instead of watching my business. I was looking over cross the creek. And when that old tree began a cracking and Odie said, 'Run,' why, I just took out right ahead of that old tree. Just a flying. I run, couldn't go this a way or that a way, there's a fence over here and bushes over there. Couldn't get out of the way. I had to run straight. I run straight

ahead and I heard it a cracking and coming down at me. I just looked. There was a great big limb on each side. It divided, a big fork. If it would have hit me it would have mashed me in the ground. But I just ran till I seen I was clear of that and I just turned right around and laid down, right on my belly. I laid down there and that tree come down on and I never even got a scratch.

"And Odie, he come down through them bushes, a hollering for me. When he found out he hadn't killed me, he was raring at me then for running. He said run and I wasn't paying any attention which a way the tree was a going. He said run and that's what I was doing. And I outrun it. Odie was scared. But I was just divided, divided even, just as pretty as if I had measured each way. Just straight between that fork."

SPLIT OAK BASKETS

Odie: *"I ain't no expert at it, I know how it's done."*

During interviews Odie had revealed he knew how to make white oak split baskets. He volunteered to demonstrate and it was arranged to record and photograph it in a step by step process. Because of time and travel difficulties only the initial stages were recorded. Odie had selected a hillside to search the right white oak for his basket. He described the proper location.

"Where the sun hits it on that side, on a slope where the sun hits again't it. It's generally gravelly. The ground makes a ridge, you know.

"The tree shouldn't be over three and half, four inches that I know of. I stopped the other evening to look, they're down here at this Godwin trail. We cut em anytime I guess. I imagine they'd rive anytime. It don't make any difference. We cut em in the winter time all the time. Winter time was the only time we ever messed with it. Sitting by the fire. We fooled with, played with it of a winter time, had a school teacher stay here and we got into playin. We had a lot a fun whittlin. I ain't no expert at it, I know how it's done. I think the most part of it is if you learn how .to split out your strips.

"We wouldn't have but one pattern. Dad made more. But I never did try. He made that one hanging up there, made that before he died in '29.

"That white oak, you can tell by the bark on it. It's kinda white. That's a big knot there, that'd ruin half a that. You want long, longer area, more slats you get. You don't have to splice so often. There'd be half a that one might be good. Oh, we'll take two or three. You get half

a that, you have several slats, strips. You know, we had a job findin em too. Get out and look."

After the white oak has been cut, it is carried back to the farm. Then Odie uses a wedge and sledge hammer to split the log in half.

"See that white in there? All the white in it is all that will rive. That inside there won't peel right.

"We gotta split it down the middle. I think it's doin all right so far if it don't get worse. Not a very good wedge. Green and tough, it'll split. I don't believe this is a very good tree. This is got too much red in there, just the white is all that'll rive. We'll see, it may split good and may not.

"This'll do to make part of it with. The handle and the rim if it don't run good. One tree oughta do it, according to how big.

"Always start at the top of anything split. When you go to split one out, start at the top end."



Figure 11. Odie Bridgeman splits a white oak log for baskets using a froe for prying.

Odie takes the half and splits it into quarters. He uses the froe as a wedge to help pry the quarters into eighths.

"You know what that is? A froe. There isn't many of those left. It'll have to die with me. That's gonna run out on me.

"Dad made em, baskets, for pastime. He got invalid and as an invalid he done that. He could use his hands all right. He couldn't use his feet. Just picked it up I guess."



Figure 12. Odie shaves a piece of white oak to the required width for basket ribs.

Odie places an eighth in a vise and uses a draw knife to shave away the dark red center.

"I usually make them there slats as wide as you want em. I'm gonna take the bark off the other side. I'm just takin the heart of it now. Guess that's as far as I'm gonna go on that one. That knot will stop me.

"When you do like this, try to get this the same width all the way through there. That's the width of your slat. I guess I got pretty good eyes for my age.

"We'll see if it'll rive before we go too much. That's split. We call that riving, riving boards. Used to they never bought the roofing, they made it. Go out and cut these big white oak down and, well, black oak too, make that. I've made a few.

"Some of em rived hickory. Take hickory, they take the bark some way and peel the bark and make it. Made these splints like this and bottom chairs with em."

Odie begins to pry off splints with a pocketknife.



Figure 13. Odie carefully splits out splints for the basket sides.

"I'm gonna try it and see if it'll open up. I need a bigger knife though. Now you see, this is the heart of the tree and this is the bark. You split it this-a-way, the same way as the bark and the heart. That's the way you split em. Need a butcher knife. Don't want to get it started the wrong way. Start in the middle all the time. You gotta start in the middle, you can't start on the outer edge or it'll run out on you. And you can kinda guide it by the way you pry on your stick. I don't know if my pocketknife will split it or not. What's the matter here, that shivered up there some way. Shivered is kinda messed up, double split. I'm

gonna have to cut that off there." (A knot is in the way.)

Odie taps the draw knife into the end of the piece and starts to split it.

"It's tryin' to get thinner on that side. You can kinda break it back by bending this side the most."

When the end is split Odie pries it wider with his knife, then holds it under his arm and bends one side more than the other to make the split run even down the middle.

"Now, if that was a good river, that'll rive, split two or three times more.

"I'm not a very good hand at it, that run out on me. If I can get it started right, started in the middle. I don't know if it's the timber or me, I think it's me. That oughta peel right. Now I'm a-going. (He begins to peel the strip apart.) You get the middle ones, that'll split right along, right out. I thought maybe we could, anyway, make the ribs in the basket. That'll be prednear all right for the ribs. Ribs is what form the basket this a way, you weave around. The splits form the basket this a way. (He bends several ribs upward.) This'll be the ribs, form the basket this way. Yeh, dress em down green.

"This is the top end, ain't it? I believe this is the one I chewed on. This is the top end. But I don't believe that'll split again. It ought to, if you want it to weave with. Just too wide, too wide to weave in. About half that width.

"I ain't gonna try to make a fat one, I wouldn't try. You make these according to how big a basket you want. You can make em any size.

"There ain't very many that knows how to split this out, but anybody can make a basket, I think. I didn't make a habit of it. We just got started one winter there. Teacher stayed

here, boarded with us. He'd go back and forth on the train. Whole pile of baskets go back. Of a night we'd sit in there and make baskets and we had an old fireplace, had to sweep the shavings in. We had this floor bout boot top deep in shavings.

"That's thin enough for them there ribs all right. Let's count. Yah gotta have an odd number to weave in there if you don't, you go back over the same track all the time.

"Take these little ones, take a little one of these trees and they'll peel right down pretty thin. It ought to. I believe that's long enough to make a basket. Somebody the other day wanted to know if we had the basket my father made. It was big, would hold two or three bushel."



Figure 14. A split oak basket made by Charles Bridgeman, Odie's father.

Odie lays a splint against his leg and runs his knife over it to smooth it off on both sides.

"Take a piece of glass, it is pretty good to scrape them with. Just broken glass. Make em pretty thin."

In a later telephone conversation, Florence remembered that Odie's mother took a dishpan of water and heated it and placed the splints in it so that they wouldn't dry out. They were then ready for use. At that time Odie was still splitting out splints and had shavings all over the kitchen floor. Odie finished a small basket which he eventually gave to relatives.

THE SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST

Florence: *"I wouldn't sign the papers to sell unless they let us have the right to live here."*

By 1930, a good portion of the forested acreage of southern Illinois had been cut or used as wooded pasture. Annual forest fires contributed to what became known as the "wastelands." Because of soil content and the high rate of water run-off, the area could not resist prolonged drought. Over 40 percent of the land was classified as severely eroded or destroyed. Newspapers across the state and particularly the CHICAGO TRIBUNE began to campaign for more forests in Illinois.⁸

In 1931, an official from the United States Forest Service Regional Office in Milwaukee came to southern Illinois for a field examination. He was accompanied in his investigations by agents of the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension, University of Illinois. His report was entitled "A Preliminary Report on Illini National Forest Purchase Unit in Jackson, Union and Alexander Counties, Illinois, including about 304,840 acres and Shawnee National Forest Purchase Unit in Gallatin, Hardin, Pope, and Saline Counties, Illinois, including about 291,392 acres." The report⁹ listed three definite purposes; prevention of erosion, timber production and demonstrational areas. It was noted in the report:

"The general region has been farmed for 100 years and much of the farm soil is worn out. The cost of reclaiming it as farm soil by artificial methods is prohibitive. Many farms have been abandoned on account of worn out soil and erosion. A large percentage of these are on soil which should not have been cleared of timber. It was suitable only for tree crops. Practically the whole region has been logged from one

to ten times."

The Fifty-seventh General Assembly of the State of Illinois passed an enabling act in June 1931 inviting the federal government to establish another forest in Illinois. The National Forest Reservation Commission approved the purchase units in 1933. Harrisburg, which had provided most of the initial leadership, was pleased. A local organization, the Illinois Ozarks Reforestation Unit, was formed and pledged to establish the forest.

Because the Civilian Conservation Corps camps were to stay the winter in southern Illinois and work projects could be accomplished, an urgency was felt by local boosters to begin the purchasing of land.

Priority was given to wasteland priced \$1-\$2 an acre. Additional monies were paid for better and timbered land. Meetings were held to inform local owners of the opportunity. The offer for sale had to come from the land owner; the Forest Service would not solicit sales.

Most tracts offered were small; the largest offered in the Illini unit was 1,600 acres, in the Shawnee, 300 acres. In fall 1933, the acquisition party set up a temporary office in Harrisburg and began traveling to meet with land owners. Appraisers followed. As one recalled:

"It was fun to dicker for land in those days. I generally got beat when sitting down in a fence corner whittlin' with some little land owner out in the hills of the Illinois Ozarks. I made up by running tight offers when taking options from the

large land owners."

Throughout 1933 and 1934 purchasing continued. By 1939, to avoid confusion the separate names were dropped and on September 6, President Roosevelt proclaimed the purchase units "The Shawnee National Forest."

Three cycles of purchasing have occurred. Over 87 percent was acquired before World War II. The second period of purchase was 1947-1954, the third began in the 1960s.

The majority of the Larue-Pine Hills in Union County was purchased between 1934 and 1937 with the Pine Hills Recreation Area being originally created and the Larue swamps added later. As noted earlier, its unique character gave it priority. Its scenic beauty contributed to its attractiveness. In May 1969, the Forest Service approached the Bridgemans to purchase their acreage through authority of the Weeks Act of 1911 and 1969 Land and Water Conservation Funds. The purpose for the purchase included: 1) stream protection, 2) timber and wildlife enhancement, 3) adjacent to the Pine Hills Recreation Area, 4) adjacent to the proposed George Rogers Clark Recreation Way, and 5) a possible lake site. Odie and Florence Bridgeman reserved the right to occupy and use the house and outbuildings and four acres for the remainder of their lives.

Today the Bridgemans continue to reside at their small farm on the banks of Hutchins Creek nestled in the Pine Hills. However, long range plans include a move to Alto Pass, a small town several miles east. But it is the Bridgemans themselves that remain a cultural resource and testify to the individual spirit and the heritage of southern Illinois and the Illinois Ozarks.



Figure 15. Odie and Florence Bridgeman with an old wooden spoke, rubber tired farm wagon.

POSTSCRIPT: In the spring of 1984, Odie and Florence Bridgeman moved to Alto Pass, Illinois.



Figure 16. The Bridgeman place, November, 1984.

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